

also flows into the Nolichucky, and coupled with the system mentioned above, drains an area covering roughly the eastern half of Yancey County. The Cane River has its headwaters along the western slopes of Mt. Mitchell and drains the western half of the County before flowing into the Nolichucky. The general pattern of drainage in the area is from south to north.

The Board of Water and Air Resources of the State of North Carolina has placed sanitation classifications on most streams in the State in order to determine their safety, suitability, and best usage for the general public. Briefly, the classification system is as follows:

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| Class A-I | Suitable as a source of water supply for drinking, culinary, or food processing purposes after treatment by approved disinfection only, and any other usage requiring waters of lower quality; |
| Class A-II | Suitable as a source of water supply for drinking, culinary, or food processing purposes after approved treatment equal to coagulation, sedimentation, filtration, and disinfection, etc., and any other usage requiring waters of lower quality; |
| Class B | Suitable for outdoor bathing and any other usage requiring waters of lower quality; |
| Class C
& C Trout
Waters | Suitable for fishing and fish propagation, and any other usage requiring waters of lower quality; |
| Class D | Suitable for agriculture and for industrial cooling and process water after treatment by the user as may be required under each particular circumstance. |

Most of the streams in Yancey County are classified either "C or C Trout. Notable exceptions are: a large section of the headwaters of the South Toe until it reaches Celo (B Trout); Bowlen's Creek, the source of Burnsville's municipal water supply, which is A-I from its origins to an impoundment site; the Nolichucky River which is A-II from Hollow Poplar Branch to the Tennessee line.